The Conflict Resolution Meeting Process

The Conflict Resolution meeting is a structured group process that includes the appropriate people to problem solve more effectively and efficiently. This process is used when there needs to be a decision made (be sure to carefully assess what can wait verses wanting to wait) or a problem resolved. Conflict resolution should also be seen as a way to address issues that may interfere with or support the Collaborative Meeting decisions and processes. However, this meeting should not replace the Collaborative Meeting and those conducting these meetings should carefully consider the impact of the group's decisions and ensure the proper players are at the table for the process.

For this meeting, using a flip chart is most helpful when in a room together so that folks can see where the group is in the process at any given time. Follow the process one step at a time. Do not drift into the next step. This process is most effective when you stick to one step at a time. The structure ensures group focus and also moves the process along faster.

1. **Establish and review ground rules before every meeting!**
2. **Put the current issue or problem on the table:** Anyone should be able to call a meeting. Invite the key people affected by the issue to the table for the meeting.
3. **Allow for honest reactions to the issue/problem:** Set a time limit and allow folks to get their initial reactions or feelings out on the table. If applicable, discuss unspoken issues or behaviors that may be affecting others in the process.
4. **Brainstorm how to resolve the issue/problem:** Chart any and every thought that folks have. All ideas are good and may lead to the answer in the end. Do not hold back and do not dismiss any ideas at this point.
5. **Discuss potential barriers:** Assess all potential barriers that may prevent solving the problem. Consider what folks may perceive, what may get in the way and what lessons have been learned from past or similar experiences. Also be sure you have all the information necessary and the appropriate people present to make a decision
6. **Make a plan to overcome barriers and create solutions:** This area is critical as you start looking at strengths and creative ways to solve the problem. Draw from your earlier brainstorming ideas in step 4. List steps, who will do what, when tasks will be completed and copy plan for each member.
7. **Once a decision is agreed upon, discuss how the group will implement action steps (if part of the resolution) and how outcomes will be communicated**.
8. **Decide a follow up date to =ensure action steps and communication did actually occur.**

Conflict Resolution and Decision Making Checks and Balances

1. **Is this resolution decision based on enough information?**

2. **Is this resolution decision in keeping with System of Care and the Collaboratives' vision and mission?**

3. **Will this resolution decision support implementation of the strategic plan of the agency?**

4. **Does this resolution decision support efforts to respond to the feedback form staff?**

5. **Is implementation of this resolution decision realistic and doable?**

6. **Has the resolution decision-making process worked for everyone?**

7. **Is everyone willing to leave the room and support this resolution decision to everyone throughout the community and to Collaborative partners?**

Sample Ground Rules for Conflict Resolution Meetings

1. Build trust to a level of being honest without fear of reactions from other team members, getting in trouble or hurting each other's feelings:
   - Initially, take some risks that result in getting a positive response from the team or reach a positive outcome
   - <u>Make conscious, verbal announcements</u> when the team recognizes that one member may accidentally impede the process through his or her current behavior or actions, so that each member can begin to recognize in advance when he or she is shutting the process down
2. End the blaming:
   - Assume all members come to the table with good intentions and are doing the best they can
   - Prepare for mistakes and work through them together
   - Make no excuses but brainstorm solutions
   - Clarify steps and decisions made
3. A "Time Out" hand signal or statement will be used when any member of the team notices that the group is either off task on the agenda or is not respecting a ground rule. This is used to serve as a reminder of commitments to this process and help practice conducting the process properly
4. May need to "agree to disagree" sometimes
5. Bring the group back together immediately at the first sign of a barrier or problem to implementing an agreed upon plan
6. Project potential barriers to decision implementation and create a proactive plan to communicate decisions
7. Evaluate each meeting upon its completion in an effort to continue improving the process
8. Celebrate successes.